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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2103

<http://www.mcgovern.house.gov>

March 18, 2011

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama,

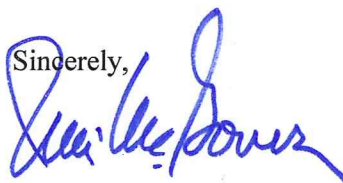
I write to express my serious concern over the deteriorating human rights situation in Bahrain. The violent crackdown by Bahraini security forces on protesters and arbitrary arrest of political dissidents must not be tolerated. In a statement released Thursday, March 16, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, condemned the "shocking and illegal" use of force by Bahraini troops. At least three civilians and three police officers were killed in attacks on Wednesday. An additional six opposition leaders have reportedly been detained in overnight raids.

While I am encouraged by Secretary Clinton's characterization of the military aggression as "alarming," and by your emphasis to King Abdullah and King Hamad on "the need for maximum restraint," a more robust U.S. response is necessary. With King Hamad's declaration of a three-month state of emergency in Bahrain and the arrival of 2,000 Saudi and Emirati troops as part of the Gulf shield forces under the aegis of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), U.S. action is critical to prevent an escalation of bloodshed in Bahrain.

Reports indicate that security forces have taken over Salmaniya Hospital in Manama as well as other health facilities, and are preventing injured protestors from receiving medical attention. Human rights activists assert that medics who have tried to help the wounded in the streets have been beaten. Gulf shield forces have also reportedly engaged in brutal attacks on Shiite villages. This conduct is a blatant violation of international law. Moreover, the sectarian strife actively promoted by the government is unacceptable.

I urge the Administration to strongly condemn the excessive use of force by security personnel in Bahrain and to consider imposing a restriction on weapons to our GCC allies in the Persian Gulf. As the United States promotes democracy and the rule of law in Tunisia and Egypt, we risk undermining our moral values by allowing brutal repression to persist unabated in Bahrain. Mindful of U.S. geopolitical strategic interests in Bahrain, I ask for your support in increasing the pressure on Bahrain and its neighboring governments to immediately stop the violence against peaceful protesters. We must not allow more loss of innocent life, especially when we have significant leverage at our disposal to ensure respect for inviolable human rights.

Sincerely,



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

JPM:cmf

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